A COMMITTED, CREATIVE BOARD

Members of the Norwegian-American Historical Association should know that their board of directors is an incredible group of dedicated people who faithfully come together for important discussion, debate, dialogue, and consensus in our common commitment to the core message of NAHA: to capture the cultural richness of the Norwegian-American experience, uniting the community for the benefits of extending cultural awareness, scholarship, and understanding.

Board committees explore several additional opportunities for our members and guests to engage in thoughtful conversation with scholars and leaders of the Norwegian-American community. For example, in the summer of 2014 our tour, “Bridging the Continent, Bridging the River,” sparked a collaboration with the Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians. At our 90th anniversary luncheon, the panelists — Lee Pao Xiong, director of Concordia University’s Hmong Studies Center, Philip Anderson, president of the Swedish-American Historical Society, regional historian Dr. Annette Atkins, and NAHA archivist Dr. Gary DeKrey — engaged us in thinking about the future of our past.

This coming May, members will have the opportunity to visit the earliest Norwegian-American churches in Goodhue and Rice counties. And of course, our biennial meeting and conference offers opportunities for learning and connecting with fellow members in October.

Over the last three years a strategic plan has been in place that challenged and stretched us to a new horizon. With the strategic plan in hand, we have accomplished policies and plans for the archives, considered the future of our publications, redesigned and expanded our newsletter to include stories from our collections, gently refined our logo, and strengthened our commitment to our mission.

Perhaps the biggest strategy and challenge of the strategic plan was this question: Could we undertake our first-ever fundraising campaign? With the goal of climate-controlled archives in our sights we launched Club 2014. The board of directors participated 100 percent, and — thanks to our donors — we are nearly to our goal!

From Washington, Wisconsin, Indiana, New York, Iowa, Minnesota, Florida, and Saskatchewan, the board is at work meeting challenges and setting new goals in step with NAHA’s mission: to locate, collect, preserve, and interpret the Norwegian-American experience with accuracy, integrity, and liveliness.

Karen Annexstad Humphrey, President

MAY PRESERVATION TOUR SLATED

The story is common: A rural church closes its doors, becomes vacant, and is torn down.

On Friday, May 13, join NAHA and a guide team of historians to visit four Norwegian-American churches that have met a brighter fate. All built in the late 19th century in Minnesota’s Rice and Goodhue counties, these rural churches are no longer used for regular worship services. But a keen appreciation of their historical importance and countless volunteer hours have preserved them.

The tour will visit the Hauge Lutheran Church (c. 1875) near Kenyon, Trondhjem Lutheran Church (1878, 1899) near Lonsdale, and the two Valley Grove Lutheran Churches (1862 and 1894) near Nerstrand. Our guide team includes Dr. Kristin Anderson, Department of Art, Augsburg College; Dr. DeAne Lagerquist, Department of Religion, St. Olaf College; and NAHA Associate Archivist Jeff Sauve. Joining them will be representatives from each preservation project. Whether the places are familiar or new, the visits will offer participants insight into how such buildings have shaped the Norwegian-American experience.

The tour will begin with a morning presentation at St. Olaf College and will return to campus mid- to late-afternoon. Lunch is included, along with an opportunity to socialize with other NAHA members and the association’s staff and board.

For more information on the tour, visit naha.stolaf.edu or call 507-786-3221.

TO LEARN MORE

For a historical overview of Norwegian-American efforts to preserve historic places, see Marion Nelson’s essay, “Material Culture and Ethnicity: Collecting and Preserving Norwegian Americana before World War II” in Material Culture and People’s Art Among the Norwegians in America (NAHA, 1994). For several essays on the immigrant church, see Crossings: Norwegian-American Lutheranism as a Transatlantic Tradition, edited by Todd W. Nichol (NAHA, 2003).
SPECIAL BOOK OFFER FOR MEMBERS

As a special member benefit, the June 2011 conference proceedings of the association’s sister organization, Det Norskamerikanske historielaget i Norge (NAHA-Norge), are now available. Norwegian-American Essays 2014, “Migrant Journeys: The Norwegian-American Experience in a Multicultural Context” (Terje M. Hasle Joranger, editor, and Harry T. Cleven, assistant editor) contains 11 essays discussing the transnational nature of the emigrant story from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. For more information, including a table of contents and list of authors, visit tinyurl.com/NAEssays2014.

This offer is available to NAHA members for a limited time only. To receive a complimentary member copy, email naha@stolaf.edu or call 507-786-3221 by March 31, 2016. Please include your preferred shipping address.

THANK YOU TO OUR CLUB 2014 DONORS!

$9,377
Left to raise

$150,623
Contributions and commitments as of February 1, 2016

GOAL
$160,000

MORE ON UNDERSTANDING NORWEGIAN CHURCH RECORDS

EDITOR’S NOTE: This article continues to highlight the information found in Norway’s church records. For Part 1 of “Understanding Norwegian Church Records,” see the Fall 2015 issue of Currents, (available on naha.stolaf.edu).

Church records are available on the Norwegian Digital Archives site: arkivverket.no/URN:kb_read. The English version of these scanned images of church records is called “Digitised Parish Registers.” Records are accessed by browsing the scanned book pages; it is not possible to search for individual names.

The example below is from a klokkerbok of Løten Church in Hedmark. It includes the birth and baptism record of Norwegian artist Edvard Munch.

To read more about the contents of fields in the handwritten Norwegian records, see the “Column headings” sections of John Follesdal’s article on Ancestry.com: tinyurl.com/follesdal.

ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE ONLINE

The 2015 Annual Report of the Norwegian-American Historical Association is now available online. For an overview of the association’s programs, activities, accomplishments, and challenges in 2015, along with a list of our generous donors, visit the NAHA homepage to find a link to the report: naha.stolaf.edu. Request a printed copy by contacting naha@stolaf.edu or 507-786-3221.

Thank you to our Club 2014 donors! $9,377 left to raise.

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BY DALE HOVLAND

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WHITENESS EXPLORED IN OSLO CONFERENCE

“Nordic Whiteness: Export of and Assimilation into the Ideal in a Comparative Historical Perspective,” was held at the National Library of Norway in Oslo on November 11, 2015. Archives curator at the National Library, Dr. Jana Sverdljuk, and lecturer at the University of Oslo and former NAHA-Norway chair, Dr. Terje M. Hasle Joranger, planned the event. Formal organizers were the National Library of Norway and Det norskeamerikanske historielaget i Norge (NAHA-Norway). The National Library and the Free Speech Foundation (Fritt Ord) sponsored the conference, with participants coming from Finland, Sweden, Norway, and the United States.

Whiteness conference organizers Terje Joranger (above) and Jana Sverdljuk (right)

The conference introduced the concept of whiteness to a Nordic audience. Whiteness is both a social and ideological construct that has become a powerful symbol around the world, in that it addresses privileges and properties said to be unique to “white people.” Whiteness studies became influential in the United States in the late 20th century, inspired by David Roediger’s seminal study, The Wages of Whiteness (Verso, 1991). The event was opened by Håge Stensrud Husstein, deputy of the Department for Research and Dissemination at the National Library of Norway, and Nils Olav Østrem, NAHA-Norway chair and professor at the University of Stavanger. Following the opening, Sverdljuk and Joranger introduced the conference, which focused on the concept of whiteness historically and geographically, linking the critical notion of whiteness to migration studies. It combined two historical cases, namely 19th- and 20th-century emigration from Nordic countries to the United States and contemporary immigration to the Nordic countries. Presenters discussed aspects of whiteness in relation to migration, ethnicity, gender, and class in two defined locations and in two time periods.

The first section of the conference, “Integration of Migrants from the Nordic Countries in the USA in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” emphasized the historical transformation of people who come from the Nordic countries Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland as immigrants to the United States. In the second section, titled “Contemporary Migration and Integration in the Nordic Countries,” presenters discussed the contemporary integration process of different migrants in the Nordic countries and traced the development of “Nordic whiteness” over time. A number of presentations from the conference and additional articles will be published in an anthology on Nordic whiteness edited by Sverdljuk and Joranger. For more information on the conference, including a list of presenters and their topics, visit tinyurl.com/nordicwhiteness.

Read More about the Bygdelag Movement...

NAHA Editor Emeritus Odd Lovoll has written extensively on the Bygdelag in America. While these titles are out of print, they are available in many libraries and for sale online. Used copies may be available through NAHA.

A Folk Epic: The Bygdelag in America
By Odd Sverre Lovoll (NAHA/Twayne, 1975.)

Norwegian-American Studies
Mysterious photo offers clues

BY JEFF SAUVE, NAHA ASSOCIATE ARCHIVIST

An opportunity to solve a mystery using archival resources presented itself this past November. NAHA board member Blaine Hedberg asked the archivists to help identify the church depicted in a photograph he owned. Unfortunately the back side of the image did not contain any annotations. The only clue offered was the image’s caption in white ink, “N. L. synod church going-up-in flames Nov-17-11.”

Several assumptions may be made by closer inspection of the image. “N. L.” signifies that the church was affiliated with the Norwegian Lutheran Synod. An internet search on the date of November 17, 1911, reveals that it was a Friday, which means this was an event other than normal Sunday services, perhaps a wedding or funeral as a large, well-dressed crowd is shown watching the church burn. Finally, the photographer “H. Pederson” might have an association with the church, since he was present at whatever event was occurring at the time. Hedberg believed the church was located in the Midwest, perhaps Minnesota or Iowa.

The first step was to consult the Minnesota Historical Society’s compiled list of photographers and their working locations. “H. Pederson” did not appear, nor did his name appear in a Google search of photographers. Therefore, it must be assumed the photographer was an amateur.

The next step was to utilize various free, online newspaper databases, such as the Library of Congress’s “Chronicling America,” and the Minnesota Newspaper Digital Hub. By limiting the search scope to the time frame of the fire and using the phrase “church burn,” the following result was immediately obtained in the Library of Congress database: “Synod Church Burns at Benson. Fine Structure Becomes Prey of Flames An Hour Before Funeral of Minister’s Wife” (Willmar Tribune, Nov. 22, 1911). A quick comparison to congregational records in the NAHA archives confirmed the church as Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Benson, Swift County, Minnesota.

As to the photographer in question, most likely “H. Pederson” is 18-year-old Hans F. Pederson, the son of Our Savior’s Rev. Chr. Pederson. According to the newspaper clipping, the fire started by “an overheated pipe in the basement, leading from the furnace to the chimney, which was too close to the woodwork. The janitor [started] the furnace in the forenoon to have the church warm for the funeral services of Mrs. Chr. Pederson, the beloved wife of the pastor.” Fortunately no one was injured and several objects were saved from the slow-burning building.

USEFUL RESEARCH TOOLS

The following online websites are free and recommended for those interested in general research and family history:

• The Library of Congress’s Chronicling America provides digital access to historic newspapers published in the United States from 1836 to 1922. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

• Minnesota Historical Society’s Minnesota Newspaper Digital Hub provides digital access to newspapers published in Minnesota between 1856 and 1922. mnhs.org/newspapers

• Minnesota Historical Society’s Directory of Minnesota Photographers provides biographical and historical information about commercial photographers and photographic studios. The most complete data is about 19th- and early 20th-century photographers (1850-1920s): http://www.mnhs.org/people/photographers/

Willmar Tribune, November 22, 1911. Courtesy of Chronicling America.

The church was erected in 1901, at a cost of about $15,000 and only in the previous year of 1910 was the debt paid off in full. Rev. Christopher Pederson said of that time of double sorrow, “What a tragedy, a church in ashes and a new grave.”

Including two organs, the piano, the altar portrait, the seats and carpets, the dishes, and several stained glass windows. The church was erected in 1901, at a cost of $15,000 and only in the previous year of 1910 was the debt paid off in full. Rev. Christopher Pederson said of that time of double sorrow, “What a tragedy, a church in ashes and a new grave.”

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If you have Norwegian-American letters, diaries, photographs, family histories, recordings, and community or congregational materials at home, or if you know of such items in the hands of others, please contact us about a donation. Perhaps this list of recent donations will suggest some possibilities. The archives continue to benefit from the generosity of members and friends who have made important donations, and we welcome your help in building the collection. We are particularly interested in materials that bear on the experiences of post-World War II Norwegian immigrants and in Canadian materials, but we welcome donations illustrating all aspects of Norwegian-American history and culture. For guidance on what we collect, please consult the guidelines at the bottom of the Archives page on the NAHA website: naha.stolaf.edu/archives/guidelines.pdf. Although we aren’t able to acknowledge all donations here, we do appreciate each one, large or small. Families may be sure that important donations made to the NAHA archives will remain open for future family consultations.

DONATED OCTOBER 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2015

FAMILY HISTORIES, MEMOIRS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES


- Hadelandslaget Papers. Organizational records (1910–83) including clippings, correspondence, financials, histories, membership photographs, and siege papers. Added to P0465 Bygdelagene Papers. Donated by Hadelandslaget.


- Paulson, Carl O. (1909–2002) Papers. Carl was the grandson of Rev. Ole Paulson, one of the founders of Augsburg College, Minneapolis. The collection includes several hundred photographs of the extended family (ca. 1870–1980); materials regarding Argyle and Adams Lutheran Churches, Argyle, Wis. (correspondence, histories and photographs); and biographical materials regarding Ole Paulson. Added to P0539 Family Histories. Donated by Ron Nagel.

- Waterville, Iowa, historical materials (translated and transcribed by Rev. Donald L. Berg): A Little of Old East Paint Creek Congregation’s History 1851–1926 (compiled by L. A. Grangaard and A. P. Lea); Minutes of Joint Meetings for Old East and West Paint Creek, Faegre and Lansing Congregations (1887–1945); Minutes of Proceedings for Faegre Prairie Congregation (1867–1919); and Faegre Prairie Congregation’s Financial Reports (1876–1919). Added to P0537 Congregation Papers. Donated by Rev. Donald Berg, NAHA Lifetime Member.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Stereoviews (Norwegian): Waiting to welcome Dr. Nansen, Christiania, Norway (1897), Christiana’s Largest Market (1900), and Arrival of the New King and Queen at Trondheim and Their Reception by the Diplomatic Corps—Coronation of King Haakon and Queen Maud (1906). Donated by Chester C. Graham.
Logging camps, or “pineries,” provided an important source of employment for Norwegian-American men in the 19th and 20th centuries. “These rugged men of Norway, skilled in the use of ax and saw, had no difficulty getting work, and how they throve on it!” writes Alfred O. Erikson in Norwegian-American Studies, Vol. 15 (NAHA, 1949). At the turn of the century, however, the logging industry was transformed by a revolutionary innovation: the steam engine. Oxen and horses were no longer the most efficient means of transporting colossal trees to ports, where they would be shipped to other parts of the country. To read more about logging in the Pacific Northwest, see these essays in Norwegian-American Studies: Vol. 13, p. 133 and Vol. 30, p. 196.